contacted Pakistani authorities to seek their assistance in the matter of release of Indian hostage in Afghanistan.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Agreement in the field of science and technology with U.S.

2476. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has signed an umbrella agreement on cooperation in the field of science and technology with U.S.;

(b) whether the delegation has visited Washington for this purpose;

(c) if so, the composition of such delegation;

(d) the expenditure incurred by Government thereon; and

(e) the areas identified for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Yes Sir. The India-US S&T Agreement was signed on 17 October, 2005 in Washington, D.C.

(b) to (c) Yes Sir, A three-member delegation comprising the Minister of State for Science and Technology and Ocean Development, Head of the International Cooperation, Department of Science and Technology and Private Secretary to MOS (S&T & OD) visited United States to sign the agreement.

(d) The estimated expenditure incurred by the Government is Rs. 7,12,000/-.

(e) The present Agreement is an umbrella inter-governmental agreement. Specific areas of bilateral cooperation would be identified subsequently.

Investment of EPF amount

2477. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether EPFO is examining the feasibility of investing a portion of the funds in equities to generate higher returns to make good the losses;